

The Attack upon Fredericksburg Heights

May 3, 1863, by the Sixth Corps.

[We are permitted to publish the following clear account of the attack on Fredericksburg from a private letter to a gentleman in this city.]

Maj.-Gen. Sedgwick having been assigned to the command of the left wing, composed of the 1st and 6th Corps, Maj.-Gen. Newton, by seniority took command of the 6th Corps. The 1st (Brooks's) Division was sent over in pontoons at Franklin's vision before daylight on the 30th of April, with the exception of one volley from the rifle pits, all opposition, except one dozen men. Reynolds's Corps (the 1st) had greater difficulty lower down. Wadsworth's Division crossing the river and attacking themselves. It was late in the forenoon when this crossing was effected—the loss was greater, and some 50 prisoners were taken from the Rebels.

The enemy's force was nearly 35,000 men. With the exception of some demonstrations we made no further movements until Saturday, May 2, by which time the enemy had detached A. P. Hill's Division and other forces to meet Hooker at Chancellorsville.

On Saturday Reynolds's Corps was ordered to take up their bridge and recross the river, marching up the river to the support of Hooker.

Gen. Sedgwick then resumed the command of the 6th Corps.

May 2d—At 11:10 p. m., Saturday, the 6th Corps was ordered to take Fredericksburg, and effect a junction with Hooker. Gen. Newton with his division, and the light brigade under his command, followed the way; Gen. Howe with his division followed the rear. Gen. Brooks's Division was immediately met by the Rebels' skirmishers, who retired gradually to the entrance of the town at Hazel Run, where they rallied for a desperate resistance, but Lieut.-Col. Hamlin, 6th N. Y. Vols. (John Cochrane's Chasseurs), decided and routed them by a bold and judicious movement which consisted in not advancing his skirmish line, but concentrating the remainder of his line and making a sudden charge upon them.

The Rebels were thus gained, but the famous rifle pits and batteries along the Heights upon which the Marye House is situated, the scene of Burnside's failure, which commanded the road to be followed by the column, remained yet to be taken.

The troops were massed in town, it being then too dark to see even the outline of the hills and positions to be stormed.

On Sunday, four regiments, 23d, 102d, and 83d Penn. Vols. and 62d N. Y., were thrown forward in open order to face the enemy's works, and ascertain whether they were occupied. There had been no sign of the enemy's presence, and Gen. Newton had been assured that there was but one Rebel regiment on picket in the place.

When the reconnoitering approached within twenty paces of the work, with a force well the Rebels unmasked themselves, and the whole hill between the Marye House and the railroad became a double girdle of fire. Their artillery opened at the same moment. It was just dark enough to make every flash distinct, and the sight was beautiful but terrible.

The reconnoissance having succeeded in its object, withdrew, but the Rebels were not less.

Howe's Division, following close on the heels of Newton's column, was halted, and ordered to attempt the storming of the heights on the left of Hazel Run, and Gen. Gibbon at Falmouth was ordered to cross the river and endeavor to get upon the heights to the right of the town. Neither of these attempts succeeded, but they certainly had the good effect of preventing the concentration of the enemy upon Newton on the center.

At H. M. an attack was formed on the center of Gen. Newton's force, and composed of his own division, and the Light Brigade, likewise under his command.

The left attack was deployed, composed of the 6th Wisconsin, 31st New York, 6th Maine, and 23d Pennsylvania, under Col. Burnham. The center consisted of the 7th Maine, 2d New York, and 35th Connecticut, under Col. T. C. Smith. The right consisted of the 1st New York, 7th Massachusetts. The right attack was deployed in column, composed of the 6th Pennsylvania and 43d New York, under command of Col. Spear, 6th P. V., supported by Col. Butler, commanding the 82d P. V., Major Baggett, and the New York Volunteers, Col. Chase. The men were ordered to storm with the bayonet, and not to fire.

As the attack advanced, McCarthy's, Butler's, and Harris's batteries opened with concentrated fire upon the Marye House, to prevent that serving as a shelter for the enemy's reserves.

The attack lasted ten minutes, and we lost 1,000 men in killed and wounded in that period. The enemy were bayoneted, and their rifle pits were thrown away, or relying too rarely upon their irregularity.

Col. Spear and Major Paxson were killed, Col. Johns and Lieut. Col. Harlow wounded, and many other valuable officers put hors de combat.

As soon as Newton's attack succeeded, Howe pushed the enemy vigorously, and succeeded after a sanguinary contest in taking the rifle pits of the enemy and the heights to the left of Hazel Run.

Newton and Howe together took about 800 prisoners and from 14 to 17 guns, including the famous Washington Artillery, posted near the Marye House. The troops behaved most nobly.

Major-Gen. Sedgwick was present the whole time.

ANOTHER ACCOUNT.

SIXTH ARMY CORPS, MAY 1, 1863.

After gaining the "Malakoff" Gen. Newton's command was rapidly reformed in two lines of battle along the crest, and Brooks's division ordered in the advance, and Howe in our rear. In this formation we pursued the flying enemy along the line of the plank-road leading direct to Chancellorsville, where we were assured Hooker, with the main body of our army, was hotly pressing them. We moved rapidly, being unmolested save by an occasional shot from two batteries of horse artillery, which at that time was all they had left them, and all they had been able to save from the captured heights. One of these batteries they ran off to our right and posted in a work on a hill toward the river, from which they delivered a harassing fire upon the General's column.

The General ordered the 12th New York, and ordered them to capture it or drive them from the position. For the former they were hardly quick enough, but succeeded in the latter, and returned with some 200 prisoners.

We now pushed on to Salem Heights, where Brooks found the enemy strongly posted at a crossroad near a place called the "Hill," and called "Old Fort," with earthworks in the timber on either side of the road, and the undergrowth filled with rifle-pits and abatis. Here, also, they had received large re-enforcements from Lee's main army and a brigade from Banks's Ford, which place we had now entirely uncovered. Brooks at once engaged them with his entire division, but was overpowered by their superior force and compelled to retire the enemy closely following. Fearing the safety of our right Gen. Newton just previous to Brooks's repulse had sent Wheaton with two regiments—the 93d and 102d Penn. Vols.—for their protection. They pressed onward to the enemy's left without opposition, crossing a deep ravine with a stream in it and to the top of the ridge beyond, where they met a most fearful volley from a hidden force of Rebels, who in five minutes were evidently impossible, and Brooks, with the 7th and 10th Maine, and 2d N. Y., were sent to support it. They arrived not a minute too soon and their well directed volleys checked and broke the Rebel regiments now rushing on Brooks and toward us, causing them to retire with a fearful loss. As they retired our army advanced, but to attempt to reach again without our present force was not deemed advisable, and we held the crest this side. In this action we lost Col. Browne and Buller, and many other brave officers. The General was also struck by a spent ball, just on the end of the short ribs, producing a severe contusion and disabling him for a while. He has since then suffered considerably from it. Brooks's division left from Wheaton—who had been detached from time to time by other regiments of the division—was relieved by Shaler with Cutler's old brigade, now Shaler's. They held the position until the following evening.

We now bivouacked upon the field, resupplying ammunition, obtaining knapsacks and collecting the wounded during the night, all in happy ignorance of what the morrow had in store for us.

On the dawn of our bright day we again got under arms and re-organizing lines, principally extending them to the right and toward the river. The Light Brigade was now sent to occupy the works commanding the river and built by the enemy for the reception of our troops crossing at Banks's Ford under Burnside. They did without opposition, although the enemy appeared upon our whole front, and we seemed to extend their lines to meet any movement we saw fit to make. A continuous skirmishing fire now began, and was kept up

until 9 a. m. from which it appeared as though they were feeling our lines to determine a point of attack. At the above time, however, it gradually died out and nothing of note occurred for an hour, when we received the cheering news that the enemy had gained our left and rear, cutting off our communication with Fredericksburg, and retreating without opposition. The Rebels' last resistance, the famous "Hill," stood for some time before which our army had stood for some time, and where they were upon thousands of their own men, and where they were upon thousands of their own men, and where they were upon thousands of their own men.

The enemy were also reported as advancing in force by the way of Fredericksburg and the Plank Road, over which we had pursued them the day previous. Fortunately our communication had been cut, and we had thus still one back-door, which now appeared, and afterward proved to be the enemy on the positions were now made. Gen. Newton, commanding the three sides of the river, Brooks the center, and Howe the left, with his left on the river. Our line was weak, and fears were entertained that the enemy might attack us in force along its whole length. At 4 p. m. they attacked.

They were repulsed; then Brooks's center and left, and were again repulsed. The two brigades fought against Howe, and with a bull-dog spirit they freshened their tenacity of a bull-dog until their fresh troops were hurled against him in such masses that he was compelled to retire, which he did a short distance and in order. It now became evident they did not intend attacking the remainder of the line, and were devoting their energies upon Howe, whose left they were pressing, with the evident intention of cutting off our communication with the ford.

Wheaton's brigade was now sent at a double pace to Howe's assistance, and afterward Gen. Newton collected such regiments as could be withdrawn from the remaining lines, when together with Butler's battery, he formed in a new and strong position to the support of Howe. Again just at the critical moment and when Howe was being pushed with redoubled vigor, the enemy pressed forward from making a further advance, and their column thinned as fearfully as it had been before. The enemy, however, they could not follow us, as we withdrew to the ford, where the corps was again deployed to engage them.

At 2 a. m. our command, well exhausted, for they had fought often and bravely, recrossed the Rappahannock, and bivouacked in the woods until the 5th inst., when we returned to our present camp, less dependent than you would be turned to naught. I brilliant successes were achieved, and that you could have witnessed the dashing generalship displayed by Gen. Newton, by which our successes were obtained, and by whose coolness, discretion and well-planned disposition we were of aid saved from Rebel annihilation and capture. In saying this, I mean no disparagement to Gen. Sedgwick, who is one of our ablest and bravest commanders, and whose whole movement, who I have no hesitation in saying, relied much upon his judgment and counsel. That they together outgeneraled Lee, who commanded the enemy's attack on Monday, is beyond doubt, and never had the enemy so good a chance to completely wipe out the 6th Corps.

Gen. Lee says: "Having recently my own command, I moved his attention to Sedgwick, who had two corps at Salem Heights, and compelled him to retire, which caused him (Lee) a severe loss, and he further calls it 'the bloodiest battle of the war.' Had we had another corps as good as our own, we would have whipped and annihilated the Rebels, and saved our right column from attack on Sunday morning the 5th inst. He has won the hearts of his men wonderfully."

Aid for Poland.

At a meeting held on the 19th of May, 1863, at the residence of Mrs. Dr. Crane, No. 21 West Twenty-first street, to consult upon the best method of organizing a committee to be called the American Ladies' Committee, to raise funds in aid of the victims of the present struggle for liberty in Poland, the ladies present unanimously resolved that a meeting be held on Saturday, 30th May, at the school-house of the Church of the Transfiguration, No. 1 East 21st street.

That proper notices be prepared and copies of the same, together with the explanatory address, be sent to all the ladies of the city, and that the ladies be asked to bring with them, as far as possible, all the ladies who wish to join in this noble and just cause, may be able to attend on that day.

The following notice was then agreed upon:

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That proper notices be prepared and copies of the same, together with the explanatory address, be sent to all the ladies of the city, and that the ladies be asked to bring with them, as far as possible, all the ladies who wish to join in this noble and just cause, may be able to attend on that day.

The following notice was then agreed upon:

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